

MEMORANDUM TO: Judge William Owens, Chair Juvenile Court Comm.

FROM: Judge Alan Allbee

July 2, 2009

RE: Reporting of Juvenile Proceedings

ISSUE: Should we recommend a legislative change to Iowa Code Sections 232.41, 94, and 115 to eliminate the use of mechanical or electronic recordings of juvenile proceedings?

DISCUSSION: While it may be argued that there is some ambiguity in the statutes that follow, court administration is taking the position that juvenile hearings may be digitally recorded in lieu of having a stenographic record. From my own personal experience I do not support elimination of the court reporters and using digital or other recording devices especially for contested termination hearings which are normally appealed. The federal regulations make clear that if a proper finding necessary for IV-E funding is not made in a court order, the only way to “save the day” is through production of a transcript. Tape recordings of hearings do not permit production of a transcript that can be certified as accurate.

LEGAL AUTHORITY:

Iowa Code Section 232.41 Reporter required.

Stenographic notes or mechanical or electronic recordings shall be taken of all court hearings held pursuant to this division unless waived by the parties. The child shall not be competent to waive the reporting requirement, but waiver may be made for the child by the child’s counsel or guardian ad litem. Matters which must be reported under the provisions of this section shall be reported in the same manner as required in section 624.9. (emphasis added)

Iowa Code Section 232.94 Reporter required.

Stenographic notes or electronic or mechanical recordings shall be taken of all court hearings held pursuant to this division unless waived by the parties. The child shall not be competent to waive the reporting requirement, but waiver may be made for the child by the child’s counsel or guardian ad litem. Matters which must be reported under the provisions of this section shall be reported in the same manner as required in section 624.9.

Iowa Code Section 232.115 Reporter required.

Stenographic notes or electronic or mechanical recordings shall be taken of all court hearings held pursuant to this division unless waived by the parties. The child shall not be competent to waive the reporting requirement, but waiver may be made for the child by the child's counsel or guardian ad litem. Matters which must be reported under the provisions of this section shall be reported in the same manner as required in section 624.9.

Iowa Code Section 624.9 Detailed report of trial.

In all appealable actions triable by ordinary or equitable proceedings, any party thereto shall be entitled to have reported the whole proceedings upon the trial or hearing, and the court shall direct the reporter to make such report in writing or shorthand, which shall contain the date of the commencement of the trial, the proceedings impaneling the jury, and any objections thereto with the rulings thereon, the oral testimony at length, and all offers thereof, all objections thereto, the rulings thereon, the identification as exhibits, by letter or number or other appropriate mark, of all written or other evidence offered, and by sufficient reference thereto, made in the report, to make certain the object or thing offered, all objections to such evidence and the rulings thereon, all motions or other pleas orally made and the rulings thereon, the fact that the testimony was closed, the portions of arguments objected to, when so ordered by the court, all objections thereto with the rulings thereon, all oral comments or statements of the court during the progress of the trial, and any exceptions taken thereto, the fact that the jury is instructed, all objections and exceptions to instructions given by the court on its own motion, the fact that the case is given to the jury, the return of the verdict and action thereon of whatever kind, and any other proceedings before the court or jury which might be persevered and made of record by bill of exceptions, and shall note that exception was saved by the party adversely affected to every ruling made by the court. (emphasis added)

42 CFR Part 1356.21 Foster care maintenance payments program implementation requirements.

(a) Statutory and regulatory requirements of the Federal foster care program. To implement the foster care maintenance payments program provisions of the title IV-E State plan and to be eligible to receive Federal financial participation (FFP) for foster care maintenance payments under this part, a State must meet the requirements of this section 45 C.F.R. 1356.22, 1356.30, and sections 472, 475(1), 475(4), 475(5) and 475(6) of the Act.

(b) Reasonable efforts. The State must make reasonable efforts to maintain the family unit and prevent the unnecessary removal of a child from his/her home, as long as the

child's safety is assured; to effect the safe reunification of the child and family (if temporary out-of-home placement is necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the child); and to make and finalize alternate permanency plans in a timely manner when reunification is not appropriate or possible. In order to satisfy the "reasonable efforts" requirements of section 471(a)(15) (as implemented through section 472(a)(1) of the Act), the State must meet the requirements of paragraphs (b) and (d) of this section. In determining reasonable efforts to be made with respect to a child and in making such reasonable efforts, the child's health and safety must be the State's paramount concern.

(1) Judicial determination of reasonable efforts to prevent a child's removal from the home.

(i) When a child is removed from his/her home, the judicial determination as to whether reasonable efforts were made, or were not required to prevent the removal, in accordance with paragraph (b)(3) of this section, must be made no later than 60 days from the date the child is removed from the home pursuant to paragraph (k)(1)(ii) of this section.

(ii) If the determination concerning reasonable efforts to prevent the removal is not made as specified in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the child is not eligible under the title IV-E foster care maintenance payments program for the duration of that stay in foster care.

(2) Judicial determination of reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan.

(i) The State agency must obtain a judicial determination that it has made reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan that is in effect (whether the plan is reunification, adoption, legal guardianship, placement with a fit and willing relative, or placement in another planned permanent living arrangement) within twelve months of the date the child is considered to have entered foster care in accordance with the definition at Section 1355.20 of this part, and at least once every twelve months thereafter while the child is in foster care.

(ii) If such a judicial determination regarding reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan is not made in accordance with the schedule prescribed in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, the child becomes ineligible under title IV-E at the end of the month in which the judicial determination was required to have been made, and remains ineligible until such a determination is made.

(3) Circumstances in which reasonable efforts are not required to prevent a child's removal from home or to reunify the child and family. Reasonable efforts to prevent a child's removal from home or to reunify the child and family are not required if the State agency obtains a judicial determination that such efforts are not required because:

(i) A court of competent jurisdiction has determined that the parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances (as defined in State law, which definition may include but need not be limited to abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, and sexual abuse);

(ii) A court of competent jurisdiction has determined that the parent has been convicted of:

(A) Murder (which would have been an offense under section 1111(a) of title 18, U.S.C., if the offense had occurred in the special maritime or territorial jurisdiction of the United States) of another child of the parent;

(B) Voluntary manslaughter (which would have been an offense under section 1112(a) of title 18, U.S.C, if the offense had occurred in the special maritime or territorial jurisdiction of the United States) of another child of the parent;

(C) Aiding or abetting, attempting, conspiring, or soliciting to commit such a murder or such a voluntary manslaughter; or

(D) A felony assault that results in serious bodily injury to the child or another child of the parent; or,

(iii) The parental rights of the parent with respect to a sibling have been terminated involuntarily.

(4) Concurrent planning. Reasonable efforts to finalize an alternate permanency plan may be made concurrently with reasonable efforts to reunify the child and family.

(5) Use of the Federal Parent Locator Service. The State agency may seek the services of the Federal Parent Locator Service to search for absent parents at any point in order to facilitate a permanency plan.

(c) Contrary to the welfare determination. Under section 472(a)(1) of the Act, a child's removal from the home must have been the result of a judicial determination (unless the child was removed pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement) to the effect that continuation in the home would be contrary to the welfare, or that placement would be in the best interest, of the child. The contrary to the welfare determination must be made in the first court ruling that sanctions (even temporarily) the removal of a child from home. If the determination regarding contrary to the welfare is not made in the first court ruling pertaining to removal from the home, the child is not eligible for title IV-E foster care maintenance payments for the duration of that stay in foster care.

(d) Documentation of judicial determinations. The judicial determinations regarding contrary to the welfare, reasonable efforts to prevent removal, and reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan in effect, including judicial determinations that reasonable efforts are not required, must be explicitly documented and must be made on a case-by-case basis and so stated in the court order.

(1) If the reasonable efforts and contrary to the welfare judicial determinations are not included as required in the court orders identified in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, **a transcript of the court proceedings is the only other documentation that will be accepted to verify that these required determinations have been made.**

(2) Neither affidavits nor nunc pro tunc orders will be accepted as verification documentation in support of reasonable efforts and contrary to the welfare judicial determinations.

(3) Court orders that reference State law to substantiate judicial determinations are not acceptable, even if State law provides that a removal must be based on a judicial determination that remaining in the home would be contrary to the child's welfare or that removal can only be ordered after reasonable efforts have been made. **(emphasis added).**